



Welcome to California:

**A HEALTH GUIDE FOR
REFUGEES, ASYLEES AND
VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING**

2004



REFUGEE HEALTH SECTION

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tips for your first days in the U.S.

- DO NOT THROW AWAY ANY PAPERS WRITTEN IN ENGLISH.
- Keep all information from your *resettlement agency*.
- Have each person in your family learn to say the name of your native language in English today.
- Have each person in your home learn how to say his or her name, phone number, and address in English right away.

Resettlement Agency

The Department of State, is the federal agency that through its bureau of Refugee Programs coordinates the reception and placement of refugees with resettlement organizations such as voluntary agencies (VOLAGs) or mutual assistance agencies (MAAs). VOLAGs like World Relief, work with newly arriving refugees to help them get settled in the U.S. MAAs like Alliance for African Assistance, serve the same purpose only they are governed and run by refugees.

Here is a card that you can have copied and carry in your wallet:

HEALTH ID CARD	I speak _____ language
	My name _____
	My address _____
	My phone number _____
	Please call this English-speaking person: _____ Phone _____
	Medical condition: _____
	Allergies/Medications: _____
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HEALTH SCREENING

A Health Screening will be one of your first appointments after you arrive in the United States (U.S.). The agency or family member that sponsored you should set up the screening and help you get to the clinic where it will be performed. The U.S. government pays for this important health appointment for refugees, asylees and victims of trafficking. It will not cost you any money.

Purpose of the Health Screening

This health screening is more complete than the one you had before you immigrated to the U.S. The purpose of the health screening is to find and begin to treat any health problem. You need to be healthy to be able to work. The clinic will gather all the information needed to help you start medical care in the U.S.

What to Expect

Your health screening includes a review of your past medical history and immunizations, a physical exam, and laboratory (lab) tests. When you go for your appointment, a healthcare provider will review the medical and immunization records from the exam that you had before you came to the U.S. A healthcare provider and other health care workers will check your blood pressure, vision, hearing, and heartbeat. They will ask you about health problems you had in the past, and they may talk to you about the harm caused by smoking tobacco and drinking alcohol.

You will also be asked to give blood, **urine**, and stool samples to test for diseases like hepatitis, anemia and parasites. You will also get a tuberculin skin test and any needed immunizations. Young children will be tested for lead in their blood.

If a problem is found during your health screening, you will be told about it and a referral will be made for you to get further medical care at another clinic or specialist. You will be given copies of your health records when your screening is done.

What You Should Bring to the Appointment

On the day of your appointment, bring the bag you got from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) when you traveled to the U.S. This bag contains a record of your health exam. You should also bring your passport or I-94 card, your Medi-Cal and Social Security cards (if you have received them) and photo identification (ID). If you are taking any medicines, be sure to bring them too.

PLACES FOR HEALTH CARE SERVICES

In California, health care services are provided in many different kinds of places. Most cities have services at these places:

Public Health Departments

Most public health departments give immunizations and treatment of contagious diseases such as tuberculosis or sexually transmitted infections. The services are free or low-cost.

Community Clinics

Most community clinics take government insurance plans such as Medi-Cal or Healthy Families. Patients without insurance often make payments based on their income (called “sliding scale” payment). Usually community clinics charge lower fees to people with low-paying jobs or to those who are not working (unemployed).

Private Doctors

Some doctors work by themselves at their own businesses. Others are part of a private clinic or work in a group with other doctors. Most doctors want proof of how the patient will pay for services when they first visit the clinic. Patients may pay through an insurance plan (such as Medi-Cal), with cash, or a credit card. It is important for you to ask the clinic if they will accept Medi-Cal or whatever health plan you have, **before you are seen by a healthcare provider.**

Hospitals

Larger cities in California have hospitals. Because hospital care is expensive, it is for people who are very sick. Hospitals are also where babies are born, or where surgery is done.

Emergency Departments (ED)

Emergency departments are located in hospitals and are used for severe health problems that need to be treated right away. You should **not** go to the emergency department for a non-urgent illness such as a cold or flu, or a routine medical visit. If you need to go for emergency care, you may have to wait a long time after arriving there because emergency departments must care for the sickest patients first.

Emergency departments are required to care for your urgent problems or life threatening conditions, even if you do not have



insurance. After the emergency is over, the hospital’s billing department can help you find ways to pay for the bill. If you have health insurance, it is very important that you:

- 1) provide the emergency department with your insurance information
- 2) telephone your insurance company right away and tell them about your visit to the emergency department. You must do this within 24 hours of your visit or your insurance company might refuse to pay and you might have to pay the bill.

Ambulance Service

In an emergency, **dial 911** on the telephone. An ambulance can give you basic medical help and take you to the hospital. Ambulances are **ONLY** for an emergency. Private doctors do not come in the ambulance to make home visits, and ambulances will not drive you to your health appointments. You will be billed for the ambulance later. Medi-Cal or your insurance plan will usually pay for the cost of an ambulance in an emergency. If you call for an ambulance and it is not an emergency you might be billed later, your insurance company may not pay for that.

EMERGENCY AND URGENT CARE

In order to receive the right medical care, you should understand the difference between *life-threatening* emergencies, *urgent* medical problems, and *routine* medical problems.

Life-Threatening Emergencies

In a life-threatening emergency, you need medical care right away. **Dial 911** on the telephone to reach the Emergency Medical System (EMS). **It is important to know how to say the name of your language in English** so the EMS operator can get an interpreter on the phone as soon as possible. Stay calm and speak slowly and clearly. **Do not hang up the phone.** An emergency response team will come to you and will begin treating the ill or injured person.

The following are examples of life-threatening emergencies:

- Chest pain—pressure or pain in the chest, shoulder or arm, often with sweating.
- Choking on food.
- Loss of consciousness.

- Trouble breathing.
- Sudden confusion, speech problems, or change in mental ability—such as not knowing where you are, or not knowing family or friends.
- Severe injuries or severe bleeding.
- Suicide attempt.
- Sudden numbness or paralysis of an arm or leg or one side of the body.
- Sudden severe headache, especially if there is neck pain or a change in consciousness at the same time.

If you have been raped or sexually assaulted, you should also go to the Emergency Department at the hospital right away.

Urgent Medical Problems

Urgent medical problems are not life-threatening emergencies, but they are serious problems that should not wait. **Get medical care right away.** These are some urgent medical problems:

- High fever, especially in babies, young children, and elderly people.
- Vomiting or diarrhea that does not stop, especially in babies, young children, and elderly people.
- Coughing up blood or vomiting blood.
- Abdominal pain that continues or becomes worse.
- A severe headache with blurred vision.
- Any health problem that becomes much worse.
- A sudden change in the ability to see, like seeing double.

The above list of medical problems requires medical help right away. If your problem is not on this list and you are not certain, treat it as an urgent problem. You can also call an *advice nurse* to help you



decide if you need to go to a healthcare provider or emergency room right away. Advice nurses can be reached by calling your healthcare provider's office or the hospital's emergency room.

When you have an urgent medical problem, you should call your healthcare provider, advice nurse, urgent care clinic, or hospital as soon as possible.

Routine Medical Visits

Routine medical visits are for non-urgent illnesses that are not life-threatening emergencies and are not urgent medical problems. Routine medical visits are for non-urgent illnesses like chronic medical problems (such as high blood pressure), adult and childhood check-ups, immunizations, or a cold or flu.

HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAMS

In the U.S., the government does not provide free health care. Instead, there are health insurance programs that help people pay for medical care.

Government Health Programs

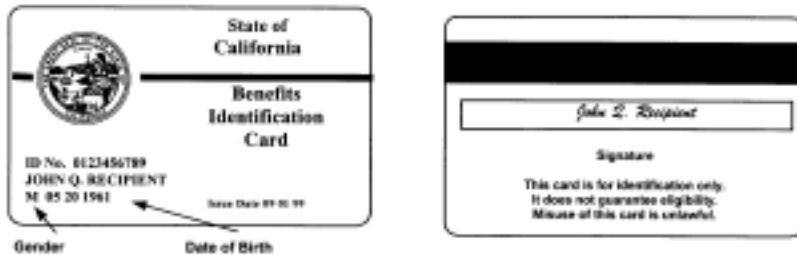
Some of the government health care programs are:

- **Medicare**—A national program for people aged 65 and older, or for persons with certain disabilities.
- **Healthy Families**—A California program for children less than 19 years old, whose families are low-income, but earn too much money to qualify for the Medi-Cal program.
- **Medi-Cal**—This is California's health insurance program for low-income people. Medi-Cal provides health and dental care. There are strict rules about who can get Medi-Cal. These rules are based on family income, immigration status and how long a family has been in the U.S.

All refugees, asylees and victims of trafficking are eligible for Medi-Cal during their first 8 months in the U.S. For asylees, or victims of trafficking, the 8 months begin when the Immigration and Naturalization Services* (the "INS") grants the asylee, or victim of trafficking, status.

To apply for Medi-Cal, you will need to go to your local County Social Services ("welfare") office to fill out forms. Within 2 months, you should receive forms to fill out. You will need to choose a healthcare

provider from the list provided on the forms. A Medi-Cal card will come in the mail for each person in your family. You need to take the card with you every time you go for health care. Here is what your Medi-Cal card will look like:



Sample Benefits Identification Card (BIC).

(Actual card size = 3 1/8 x 2 3/8 inches; white card with blue letters on front, black letters on back.)

* As of June 1, 2003, the INS has changed its name to the BCIS (Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services)

Know the name and phone number of your Medi-Cal contact person. Be sure to call your contact person if you move so your mail will go to your new address. Read every letter that is mailed to you from the Medi-Cal office and answer any questions right away. You should call your contact person if you are not mailed your Medi-Cal card within two months after applying. Call your contact person if there is anything that you do not understand.

Private Health Insurance

The most common way to buy private health insurance is through your employer. The employer and the employee share the cost of the health insurance payment every month. This payment is called a *premium*. You might also have to pay a *co-payment* when you go to a healthcare provider or pick up a prescription from a pharmacy. A co-payment is when you pay a small fee and the insurance company pays the rest.

HEALTHCARE PROVIDER	
Name	★ ★ THIS CARD IS VOID ★ ★
Member No.	DOB
Physician or Medical Group Name	
PCP Effective Date	
Phone #	Plan
OV <input type="radio"/>	ER <input type="radio"/>
Rx	

Managed Care and Fee-for-Service

Whether you have private health insurance or a government health plan, there are two basic ways that health plans work. They are *managed care* and *fee-for-service*.

Managed Care

In the U.S. today, most people with health insurance have some type of managed care plan. There are different types of managed care plans but they all involve an agreement that you, the patient, will use certain healthcare providers or clinics within those programs' *network*. Sometimes you will have a list of managed care companies for you to choose from. After you choose a managed care company, that company will give you a list of healthcare providers who are members of its' plan. You choose a doctor from this list, and that doctor becomes your *primary care doctor* (PCD). If you do not choose a doctor, the company will choose one for you. Your primary care doctor is in charge of "managing" your health care.

One of the rules of managed care is that you must always go to your primary care doctor first, unless it is a life-threatening emergency. You should go to your primary care healthcare provider when you are sick, when you need shots, or for treatment of a continuing health problem. If your primary care doctor wants you to see another doctor with advanced knowledge and training, your doctor will send you to a *specialist*. Your health care plan will not pay for you to see a specialist unless you have a *referral* from your primary care doctor. It is important to learn which services your health care company will pay for. It is also important to follow all the rules so the company will pay for your health services.

Choosing a Managed Care Plan: Ask for written information and talk with your resettlement agency, Medi-Cal contact person, friends and family about which plan they like. Learn about all the choices that you have so that you can make a good decision about what is best for you and your family.

Here are some good questions to ask when you are choosing a managed care plan:

- Do the healthcare providers in the plan speak my language?
- Are the plan's healthcare providers and hospital near my house?
- Does public transportation go to these places?
- Do I have to make co-payments and how much are they?
- Can I change healthcare providers if I want to?

Choose a primary care doctor as soon as you have received your Medi-Cal card. Call the healthcare provider's office and make an appointment for you and your family even if you feel well. It is important for you and your family to know your primary care doctor.

Fee-for-Service Plans

In fee-for-service plans, people can choose doctors that are not in the plan's network. With this type of plan, people have more control over where they choose to go for their care. Fee-for-service costs more than managed care plans.

USING A HEALTH CARE INTERPRETER

The Health Care Interpreter

When you need to talk with healthcare providers about your health care, you need a *health care interpreter*. This is someone who speaks both English and your language very well and has special training in how to interpret complex medical terms and information.

Health care interpreters will correctly interpret what a healthcare provider says to you. The interpreter will also interpret everything that you say to a healthcare provider. They may also help schedule an appointment for you, but the health care interpreter cannot help you with money matters or drive you to your appointments.

Health care interpreters must keep all of your information confidential. This means that interpreters cannot speak about your health to anyone else, or even tell someone that you were seen at the office or hospital you went to for health care.

The job of the health care interpreter is to make sure that the exchange between you and the healthcare provider is correct. This means that health care interpreters must not give their own opinions or ideas. The interpreter should not give you advice or answer questions about your medical condition. It is your responsibility to ask the healthcare provider questions about your health or treatment if you don't understand something.

When you use an interpreter, try these ideas:

- Look at and speak directly to the healthcare provider, not to the interpreter.
- Ask the interpreter to write down medicine information or treatment instructions for you.

- Only tell the interpreter what you want the healthcare provider to know. An interpreter must repeat everything that is said by both you and the healthcare provider.
- If a healthcare provider is not present, do not ask the interpreter any medical questions.
- Do not ask the interpreter for his or her opinion. Interpreters cannot give personal advice.
- Do not ask interpreters to help you make decisions.
- Always ask questions if you don't understand something or if the information is unclear.

Requesting an Interpreter

The person who calls to make a medical appointment for you should always tell the office assistant or healthcare provider that you will need an interpreter. If an interpreter is not requested at the time the appointment is scheduled, the clinic may not have an interpreter ready when you come. That means you may then have to make an appointment for another day.

Using Friends or Relatives as Interpreters

Children should not be used as health care interpreters. This is wrong for both you and the child. Using family members or friends as interpreters might keep you from getting good care, because they may not have the special skills and knowledge that medical interpreters have. Also, your medical information is *confidential* (private).

Friends, relatives or children may make mistakes that could lead to wrong diagnoses or other problems. Their feelings may get in the way, causing them to change or add information. It may not be appropriate for friends, relatives or children to tell you bad news and they may not give you all the information you need about your diagnosis or treatment plans.

What to do if an Interpreter is Not Available

If a health care worker tells you to bring your own interpreter, tell them that the law may require that an interpreter be provided. If they do not have someone who speaks your language on their staff, ask them to phone the "Language Line" at 1-800-874-9426, or another phone interpreter service. If the provider refuses to give you an interpreter, you have the right to file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights at 1-800-368-1019. You do not have to tell your name when you file a complaint.

The sample card below explains your right to an interpreter. Ask your resettlement agency to make a copy of this before you go to a medical appointment. You can show this card to the office assistant when you arrive for your appointment.

I M P O R T A N T !

I do not speak English

MY NAME IS _____

I SPEAK _____ LANGUAGE (S)

AND I NEED YOU TO GET AN INTERPRETER NOW.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act requires facilities that receive state or federal funds to provide qualified interpreter services at no cost to me. If you are uncertain how to proceed, please contact your supervisor. For more information, call the Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Civil Rights, at 800-368-1019. Thank you.

GOING TO THE DOCTOR

Going to the doctor in the U.S. may be very different from going to the doctor in your home country. Here, you are expected to take an active role in your health care. That begins with choosing the best doctor for you.

Choosing a Doctor

Whether you have health insurance or not, it is important for you to find a primary care doctor for you and your family. This doctor keeps track of all of your health history and health needs so that you will have regular and complete care.

You should think about these things when you are choosing a doctor:

- Is there a doctor that your family, friends or co-workers like?
- Does the doctor accept your health insurance?
- Can the doctor (or clinic) see all the members of your family?
- Is the doctor's office near your home, school or workplace?
- What are the doctor's office hours?
- Which hospital does the doctor work with?

- If you are not fluent in English, does a staff person at your doctor's office speak your language?

Health Professionals

When you visit a healthcare provider at a clinic, office or hospital, several other types of health care professionals may also see you. Some are listed below.

Medical Doctors (MD): Doctors in the U.S. may be *general practitioners* or *specialists*. Your general doctor or primary care doctor will send you to a specialist (such as heart specialist) if you need special tests or treatment.

Nurse Practitioners (NP) and Physician Assistants (PA) are not doctors, but they have received special training so they can diagnose some illnesses and prescribe medicines.

Registered Nurses (RN) and Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVN) have formal nursing training so they can treat patients as prescribed.

Technicians do special things like taking x-rays or blood samples.

Medical assistants (MA) help a healthcare provider with daily activities.

Receptionists and Office Assistants (OA) work with appointments and billing. They usually cannot help you with your medical needs or questions.

Making an Appointment with a Healthcare Provider

To see a healthcare provider, you usually have to schedule a time for you to visit a healthcare provider's office. In the U.S., the healthcare providers do not come to your home. When making an appointment, you will speak to an office assistant, not a healthcare provider. When you make an appointment to see a healthcare provider, you should:

- Give your name.
- Ask if the healthcare provider accepts your health plan (Medi-Cal or other health insurance).
- If you are sick, tell the office assistant what your symptoms are and how long you have had them. You will probably not see a healthcare provider on the same day unless you are seriously ill.

- If you do not need to see a healthcare provider that day, but need medical advice, ask the receptionist if you can speak to the nurse or medical assistant.
- Repeat the date, time, and location of your appointment to make sure that you have the correct information, and write it down.
- Tell the receptionist if you need an interpreter for the appointment.

Preparing to Visit a Healthcare Provider

Before you go to see a healthcare provider, gather your health papers or records so you can take them with you. Be ready to tell the healthcare provider all of your symptoms and how long you have had them. Take any of your medicines with you, including herbal medicines, to show the healthcare provider. Also take your Medi-Cal or other health insurance card, and a photo ID with you. Take a pen and notebook with you so you can write down what the healthcare provider tells you.

If you are going to be late for your appointment, call the healthcare provider's office and tell them. If you have to cancel your appointment, call the healthcare provider's office at least one day before your appointment, or you may be charged a fee.

During your Appointment

You will be asked many questions about your medical history, earlier illnesses, and the health of other family members. Some of the questions may be embarrassing, but they give the healthcare provider important information to help understand your health and what you need. The more the healthcare provider knows about you, the better the healthcare provider can diagnose and treat your health problems.

Tell the healthcare provider or nurse all of your symptoms, starting with the most serious ones. Tell them how long you have had these symptoms, how often



you have the symptoms, if they are constant or not, and what makes them feel better or worse. Give them as much information as you can so that the healthcare provider can make a correct diagnosis. Next, the healthcare provider will check you during a physical exam. You may have to undress, even if you are only being treated for the flu or a cold.

In your home country, a healthcare provider may have diagnosed your illness right away. In the U.S, healthcare providers usually order tests to get medical information that no one could know just by looking at you. Most often, healthcare providers will not prescribe medicine for you until they are sure they know what is wrong with you. Do not expect a prescription for medicine every time you see a healthcare provider.

A healthcare provider wants you to play an active part in your health care and to ask questions. Be sure to ask your healthcare provider about anything that you do not understand or anything that you do not agree with.

Be sure that you have asked the healthcare provider or nurse to repeat any information that was not clear to you. Write down the information while it is fresh in your mind. Do not expect a quick cure for every medical problem. Many illnesses will not go away completely, or will take a long time to get better. There are chronic or on-going conditions, such as high blood pressure or diabetes, which may need treatment for the rest of your life.

After Leaving a Healthcare Provider's Office

Do what your healthcare provider tells you to do. Take your medicine in the amount the healthcare provider has prescribed, and at the times you were told to take it. If you have a problem with a medicine, or you feel worse, call the healthcare provider right away. **Do not stop taking your medicine because you feel better.** Do not take other medicine, including herbal medicines, without checking with your healthcare provider first. Some medicines and herbal treatments may cause bad reactions if they are taken together or with other medicines.

TAKING MEDICINES

When taking medicine, always read the label. Know what you are taking, how much to take, precautions, and the expiration date. Do not take more medicine than the label directs. Call your healthcare provider if the medicine is not helping you.

Over-the-counter medicines

Medicine that can be bought at a store without a prescription is called an *over-the-counter* (OTC) medicine. You do not need to see a healthcare provider to buy mild pain relief medicines, cold medicines, and many other drugs. These are used for medical problems that are not serious. If you have a serious medical condition or if you are already taking a prescription medicine, you should check with your healthcare provider or pharmacist before taking OTC drugs and herbal remedies. Some OTC medicines and herbal remedies may be dangerous if taken with certain prescription medicines.

Prescription Medicines

There are many medicines in the U.S. that you cannot buy unless you have a prescription. Your healthcare provider orders these medicines just for you. Do not share prescription medicines with your family and friends and never take medicine a healthcare provider prescribed for someone else. Check the label for the expiration date and do not use the medicine after the date shown. When antibiotics are prescribed, you must finish all the medicine your healthcare provider prescribed **even if you feel better** before you finish the medicine. If you do not, the infection may come back and the same medicine may not work the next time.

Prescriptions are written for a certain number of pills, usually 1 month's supply (about 30 pills). When almost all of these pills are gone, the prescription needs a *refill*. You should telephone the pharmacy to have the prescription filled again (a refill) so that you will not run out.

Call a healthcare provider about your medicine if:

- You have any questions.
- You think you are having a reaction to the medicine.
- You don't want to take the medicine.
- Your insurance won't pay for the medicine and you cannot afford to buy it.

Generic Medicines

In the U.S., most medicines have both a brand name and a generic name. Brand name medicine is advertised and the name is in larger letters on the box. It often costs more to buy than generic medicine. For example, Advil and Motrin are the brand names for the generic medicine "ibuprofen". Tylenol is the brand name for

"acetaminophen". If you want to buy a generic medicine that costs less, ask your pharmacist or healthcare provider which one you can use.

MEDICINE REFILLS

It is very important to always have enough of your medicine and not miss a dose. Always bring **all** your medications to your clinic appointment for a healthcare provider to see. Ask a healthcare provider if you need refills and/or changes in your prescription.

When you have **7 days** worth of medicine left it is time to get a refill. Telephone or go to the pharmacy. If you have "0" refills **allow more time** for refill requests to be processed. Be sure to bring your current Insurance/Pharmacy card.

The pharmacy will need the following information from the label on the medicine bottle (see sample below):

- 1) Your name.
- 2) The name of the medicine.
- 3) The prescription number.
- 4) The number of refills you have left.
- 5) The name of your doctor.

The image shows a sample prescription label from 'Drug Store' in Anytown USA. The label contains the following information and labels pointing to it:

- Pharmacy phone #:** 555-0000
- Prescription #:** Refill 5345
- Patient's name:** Dr. Name
- Date last filled:** 03/01/04
- Doctors name:** Patient name
- # of pills:** QTY. 90
- Name of medicine:** MEDICINE
- Strength of medicine:** 800MG TABLET PA NDC# 49884
- Expiry date:** Expires 00/00/05
- Instructions for taking:** One tablet daily as needed
- # of refills left:** 3 refills
- Cost:** Copay = \$0
- Days supply:** DAYS SUPPLY: 30
- Auth#:** AUTH# 1053
- Year:** 2004

CONTAGIOUS DISEASES

Contagious diseases can pass from one person to another person. Some ways this can happen are:

- Through the air when someone coughs or sneezes.
- Through body fluids (such as sexual contact).
- Through blood (for example, from needles or shaving razors that someone else has used).
- Through skin-to-skin contact.

During your health screening you are tested for contagious diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis, or intestinal parasites. If a healthcare provider thinks you might have a contagious disease, you may need treatment.

Screening for contagious diseases is important for your health, your family's health, and the people around you. If you need treatment, do not worry. Once you are in the U.S., being diagnosed with a contagious disease will not affect your immigration status.

Tuberculosis (TB)

Most refugees, asylees and victims of trafficking come from countries where tuberculosis is common. Most people who have the TB bacteria are only infected (not sick) and are not contagious—they cannot give their TB to other people. But if someone has tuberculosis disease (active TB), it can spread to other people. Tuberculosis can kill if the person does not get treatment.

Some tests for TB are:

- **Tuberculin skin test (TST):** A little bit of testing liquid is injected just under your skin, on your forearm. After 48 to 72 hours you will return to have your skin test read. If there is a hardened area where your TST was given, it can be measured. If your skin test is positive, you will need to take a chest x-ray.
- **Chest X-ray:** If your skin test is positive but your TB germs are not active now, or have not been active in the past, your chest x-ray will usually be normal.
- **Sputum culture:** If your x-ray is abnormal, you will probably need to cough up a little sample of sputum from your lungs so it can be tested for TB germs.

TB Treatment: It takes months to treat TB, whether it is for latent TB infection (LTBI) or for active TB disease. The treatment is different for each.

- **Latent TB infection (LTBI)** is most often treated with one drug, isoniazid (INH). LTBI treatment is for people with a TB infection, but no active TB disease (these people are not contagious). By treating the latent (not active) TB infection, TB disease can be prevented.
- **Active TB Disease** must be treated with INH plus other TB drugs. After 2 or 3 weeks of treatment, the person is usually not contagious anymore. Some symptoms of active TB in the lungs are: a cough lasting 3 weeks or more, fever, fatigue, poor appetite, and night sweats.

Hepatitis B and C

Hepatitis B and C are serious diseases. Each can cause lifetime infection, liver cancer or failure. Hepatitis B and C are spread by contact with blood or body fluids. Your healthcare provider will tell you how to help yourself and protect others. There is a Hepatitis B immunization to protect against getting this infection, but there is no immunization vaccine against Hepatitis C.

Food-borne illness

Food-borne illness is often referred to as *food poisoning*. This is when a person “catches” a bacterial or viral infection that is in, or on, food. Examples of food-borne illnesses are hepatitis A, listeria, E. coli, and salmonella. Symptoms of food-borne illness include nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Food-borne illnesses can be dangerous, especially for babies and elderly people.

You can prevent getting sick from food poisoning by:

- Washing your hands before preparing and eating food.
- Washing raw vegetables and fruits (including the rinds on melons) before cutting or peeling them.
- Using different cutting boards and counter top spaces for preparing meats than those you use for preparing fruits or vegetables.

- Washing all work surfaces and utensils with hot soapy water.
- Making sure that cheeses and dairy products have been pasteurized and wrapped before you buy them.
- Keeping meat, fish, eggs and dairy foods in the refrigerator.
- Cooking all meats and fish thoroughly.

Intestinal Parasites

Many refugees, asylees and victims of trafficking come from countries where intestinal parasites (“worms”) are common. If lab tests show that you have parasites in your stool, treatment may be needed.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI)

These diseases may lead to serious health problems if they are not treated. If you or your partner have sex with other people, or have had other partners in the past, you should be checked for a sexually transmitted infection (STI). Examples of these types of infections are:

- Syphilis,
- Gonorrhea,
- Chlamydia,
- Genital warts (Human Papilloma Virus), or
- HIV.

The best way to prevent getting a STI, or prevent giving one to another person, is to not have sex. For people who are sexually active and have more than one partner, the best way to prevent getting or spreading a STI is by using condoms.

CHRONIC DISEASES

Diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, or asthma need long-term care and are called *chronic diseases*. Your healthcare provider will help you live with a chronic disease by checking you at your regular appointments, and advising you on diet, exercise and medicines. If you are given medicine, ask your healthcare provider if you should carry it with you each day when you leave home. Some common chronic diseases are listed below.

Diabetes

When the body is not able to make or use insulin (a hormone produced by the pancreas) correctly, the sugar in the blood goes higher than it should. This medical condition is called diabetes. The person with diabetes must be careful to control their blood sugar to prevent serious health problems such as blindness, heart disease, kidney failure, and amputation.

You may need pills or insulin shots to lower your blood sugar. If you are prescribed medicine, **be sure to take it every day as directed**. Never skip doses, and never stop taking your medicine without talking to your healthcare provider. If you have diabetes, you will also want to help yourself by following a specific diet and exercising every day. The California Diabetes Control Program has health information available in many languages at 1-800-828-8293.

High Blood Pressure (hypertension)

High blood pressure can cause heart attack, stroke, or kidney disease. High blood pressure is especially dangerous because there are often no warning signs. While you are feeling well, high blood pressure can be hurting your heart and blood vessels. High blood pressure is often called the silent killer because you cannot feel when your blood pressure is high.

Just like with diabetes, you can take steps to help yourself. You will want to see your healthcare provider on a regular basis, eat a healthy diet, and exercise every day. If a healthcare provider prescribes medicine, **be sure to take it as directed**. Never skip doses, and never stop taking your medicine without talking to your healthcare provider first.

Angina

When the blood vessels around the heart are damaged, they may cause a type of chest pain called angina. Doctors can diagnose this condition with tests, and may prescribe medications. As with many other chronic diseases, changing your lifestyle (i.e., eating healthier, exercising more often, and quitting smoking) will help. Follow your doctor’s advice.

Asthma

Asthma is a lung disease that can be life threatening. It causes breathing problems, often-called “attacks”. Cigarette or other smoke, dust, cold air, feathers, foods or mold may trigger an asthma attack. Your healthcare provider may want to do allergy testing to find out

what triggers your asthma. There are medicines that your healthcare provider will prescribe to prevent, or help during, an asthma attack. These medicines are important to carry with you everyday.

PREVENTIVE HEALTH

Preventive health is the best way to protect and improve your health over your lifetime. Many people think that if they feel healthy, there is no reason to see a healthcare provider. But for many diseases, a person may not feel sick until the disease is very serious. Some common tests that are easy to do are: checking your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar.

Do not wait until you are sick to see a healthcare provider. Regular exams are a big part of preventive health. A disease that is found early is usually easier to treat and cure. Healthcare providers can find early signs of illness by exams and screening tests.

Important Screening Tests for Women

Pap Smear Test: This simple test done during a pelvic exam has saved many lives by finding cancer of the cervix early enough to treat. Your healthcare provider may want you to have this test every one to two years.

Breast Self-Exam and Mammogram: Your healthcare provider can show you how to do a self-exam so that problems can be found early and treated. A mammogram is an x-ray test that can find breast cancer when it is so small that it cannot be felt, and when it can most likely be cured. Most women have their first mammogram after they are 40 years old and should get these exams regularly.

Important Screening Tests for Men

Testicular Self-Exam: Cancer of the testes is the most common type of cancer in young men, 15 to 40 years old. It is also one of the most curable types of cancer, especially in the early stages. Your healthcare provider can show you how to do a simple self-exam.

Prostate: Prostate problems are common in older men. All men who are aged 50 or older should have regular prostate exams. These exams include a rectal exam, and perhaps a blood test called Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA).

Immunizations for Adults and Children

Immunizations (also called vaccinations) are one of the most

powerful health tools ever made. They protect you and your family from diseases that have been killing people for centuries.

The **Immunization Record** is yellow and will look like this:

IMMUNIZATION RECORD	
<i>Comprobante de Inmunizacion</i>	
Name	<i>nombre</i>
Birthdate	<i>fecha de nacimiento</i>
Allergies	<i>alergias</i>
Vaccine Reactions	<i>reacciones a la vacuna</i>
Parents: Your child must meet California's immunization requirements to be enrolled in school. Keep this Record as proof of immunization. Padres: Su niño debe cumplir con los requisitos de vacunas para ser admitido a la escuela. Mantenga este Comprobante lo necesará.	

Keep your records in a safe place. Immunizations are needed to enroll in school and to get a "Permanent Residence" card or "green card" (I-551). **Remember to bring your immunization record (the yellow card) every time you visit a healthcare provider.**

After you have been in the U.S. for 1 year, you can apply for a "change of status" from refugee to resident alien. Your resettlement agency will help you with the paperwork. You will need to show that each child and each adult has had all of their immunizations.

Immunizations can cost a lot of money for adults. This means that you and your family should have all of your immunizations done while you have Medi-Cal to help pay for them. If you wait, or do not get managed care, you may not have any insurance and have to pay for the immunizations yourself. Get your immunizations right away, while you have Medi-Cal.

HEALTHY HABITS

Smoking: If you smoke, quit. It is one of the most important things you can do to stay healthy. Smoking hurts your health and the health of people around you. Smoke around you, called *second-hand smoke*, has been shown to cause diseases such as lung cancer, heart disease, and problems during pregnancy. In California it is against the law to smoke in restaurants or other indoor public

places. Ask your healthcare provider about programs to help you quit smoking. Call the California Smokers “hotline” information number at 1-800-662-8887.

Physical Activity: Exercise and being active will help you feel better and control your weight. Exercise also helps your blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and makes your heart, muscles, and bones stronger. Daily walking is an easy, simple way to exercise. Talk with your healthcare provider about an exercise program that is best for you.

A Healthy Diet: Eating the right foods can help you live a longer, healthier life. Many illnesses, such as diabetes, heart disease, and some types of cancer can be helped or prevented through a healthy diet. Try to eat foods that are low in fat and salt, and avoid sweets. You should eat at least five fruits and vegetables every day. The California Department of Health Services’ “5 A Day” program is a good resource for information on fruits and vegetables. Call your local 5-A-Day Program or 1-888-391-2100.

Alcohol: There are many laws about alcohol. It is against the law to:

- Drink alcohol and drive.
- Drink alcohol if you are under the age of 21.
- Give alcohol to anyone under the age of 21.

Also, it is dangerous to use machinery if you are under the influence of alcohol.

Women who are pregnant, or may become pregnant soon, should not drink alcohol. Many diseases are also made worse by alcohol use. Ask your healthcare provider about programs to help you. Your county may have an Alcohol and Drug Bureau with services. Alcoholics Anonymous can offer free help, check the telephone book for a local chapter near you.

Seat Belts and Children’s Car Seats: For safety, all people riding in a vehicle must wear a seat belt. This is the law, and the driver will be fined if seat belts are not used. Since seat belts are too big for babies and small children, the law says that they must sit in a special car seat with the seat belt. All children should be in the back seat and **never** sit in a seat where an airbag is used.

These are the laws about children riding in a car:

- Babies weighing less than 20 pounds (9.1 kilograms) must ride in an infant car seat facing the back of the car.

- Children weighing more than 20 pounds (about 1 year old) may sit in a child car seat, facing forward.
- Children who are at least 4 years old **and** 40 pounds (18.2 kilograms) may use booster seats.
- Children do not need a car seat or booster seat when they are 6 years old **and** weigh 60 pounds (27.5 kilograms).

Dental Care: It is very important to prevent dental problems by keeping your teeth and gums clean. Here are some good ways to keep your teeth healthy:

- Limit foods and drinks that have sugar in them, especially soda (such as colas).
- Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle. Talk to your dentist or healthcare provider for advice.
- Brush your teeth after meals and before bedtime. Use a soft toothbrush and toothpaste that contains fluoride.
- Use dental floss every day.
- Have regular check-ups and cleanings at a dentist (at least once a year) so any problems can be found before they become more serious.

Make an appointment to see the dentist as soon as you receive your Medi-Cal card. Dental care is expensive and private health insurance plans may not pay for dental care.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is when your present or former spouse, or *significant other*, hurts you. This is against the law in the U.S. Some examples of domestic violence are when your significant other or spouse:

- Threatens to or causes injury to you.
- Forces you to have sex when you don’t want to.
- Keeps you from going to a healthcare provider.
- Controls your money or keeps you from seeing your friends and family.
- Won’t allow you to leave your home.

If you or someone you know is in danger, **call 911** for emergency help. It may take several minutes to get help, so be sure that you are in a safe place where you can wait if you can. If you are not in danger but want to talk with someone about your situation, there are local agencies that can help you. If you do not know where to call, The **National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233)** can help.

Domestic violence happens in all cultures. It is important that you know that it is not your fault. You do not need to feel ashamed.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse is a crime in America. Examples of abuse are:

- Physical—such as hitting
- Sexual—such as molesting
- Neglect—such as failing to give food, supervision, medical care, or education.

If you suspect that a child is in danger, **call 911**. If you would like more information about child abuse and how to prevent it, call the **National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-422-4453**.

Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse

Elder abuse is the harm or neglect of an older person. Often the abuser is a friend or relative who is in charge of taking care of the older person. Types of abuse can be:

- Physical—such as hitting, kicking, or sexual

If I am in Danger of Domestic Violence, What Can I do?

- For emergency help, call 911 and tell the operator what language you speak.
- Go to a **“Shelter.”** A Shelter is a safe place, like a large house, where you and your children can stay to sleep and eat. Shelters are usually free and will often have information about other services in your community.
- Go stay with a friend or family member. **Do not** tell anyone where you are staying.
- Call the agency who sponsored you to come to the United States. Ask about getting legal help.

If you leave your home, make every effort to take your children with you. If you can, also take:

- A driver’s license or identification card,
- I-94 or green card,
- Bank account records, checkbooks, bank books.

- Mental (psychological)—such as making threats, name-calling, or keeping the elder isolated
- Financial—such as stealing money, or using their credit card or bank account without permission
- Neglect—when needs are not taken care of, such as food, medicine or personal care. It can also mean self-neglect.

If you think an elder is in danger, **call 911**.^{*} For more information or advice, call your county Adult Protective Services office.

***If you call 911, remember to say the name of your language in English so the operator can connect you with an interpreter.**

MENTAL HEALTH

The mental health care system in the U.S. may be very different from what you experienced in your homeland. In the U.S., there are services not only for people with long-term or severe mental illnesses, but also for people who are having emotional reactions to difficult situations in their life. These problems are often helped with counseling or medicine.

If you had a mental illness that needed hospitalization or medication in the past, tell the healthcare provider during your health-screening exam. Show the healthcare provider any reports or medicines, even if they are not in English. The health care interpreter can help your healthcare provider understand what it says. It is important that your treatment does not stop.

Problems with Feelings and How to Get Help

Some refugees, asylees and victims of trafficking come to the U.S. with dreams of a new life that will be easier and safer than the lives they had back home. But moving to a new country is hard because of all of the changes. This may cause many feelings: disappointment, sadness, anger, loneliness, fear, or confusion. These feelings are normal. Also, many refugees, asylees and victims of trafficking have had very bad things happen to them in the past, or have seen bad things done to other people. Traumatic events can upset you for many years after they happen.

When feelings are strong or hard to talk about, they can affect your behavior. When your feelings stop you from doing your daily tasks or affect your life in bad ways, a mental health professional can help.

Mental health workers are trained to listen to you in confidence, and help you find answers that are best for you.

Everyone has at least one of the problems listed below at some point in their lives. But if these problems trouble you for several days or weeks and make it hard to get through the day, **support is available**. Speak with your healthcare provider, nurse, or call your local county health department.

Sleep problems:

- Not being able to fall asleep at night.
- Not being able to go back to sleep after waking up at night.
- Being awakened at night by bad dreams or a nightmare.

Appetite problems:

- Not feeling hungry.
- Only eating if someone makes sure that you do.
- Losing weight, noticing that your clothes are too loose.
- Feeling hungry all of the time.
- Eating more food than you need.
- Gaining weight, noticing that your clothes are too tight.

Problems with your mood:

- Feeling sad all the time.
- Having crying spells.
- Feeling very irritable.
- Arguing and yelling more often.
- Isolating yourself, not wanting to be around other people.
- Sighing a lot.
- Feeling numb, as if you do not have any feelings.
- Feeling hopeless, as if there is nothing you can do.
- Not getting out of bed in the morning to do the things that you need to.
- Wishing that you would die.
- Thinking about ways to end your life.

You can find help by talking to your healthcare provider, or calling your county mental health program. Most cities have a *Crisis Line* phone number to call that can help you too.

If you are wishing that you would die (if you are *suicidal*), please call the National Hopeline to talk to a free telephone counselor. There is someone there, 24 hours a day, at **1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)**. **Tell them the name of the language that you speak, so they can get an interpreter on the phone for you.**

PATIENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Americans highly value each person's rights and responsibilities. In the area of health care, your rights are called *patient rights*, and they mean that you must be treated fairly. At the same time, you are *responsible* for taking care of your own health.

Patient Rights

In California you have the right to get health care no matter what your age, sex, race, or ethnicity. You have the right to talk with your healthcare providers and ask to be moved to another health care facility (such as a hospital), if you wish. You also have the right to be told about all hospital charges, rules and regulations. If you believe that you are not being treated fairly, you have the right to talk about your concerns. If you have a problem with your managed care company or healthcare provider, you can file a complaint.

If you do not speak English, you have the right to have an interpreter when you go for medical care. Some places use an interpreter over the telephone; others use staff or volunteers who speak more than one language. **You do not have to pay for interpreter services.**

During medical care you have the right to be treated with respect at all times. You have the right to refuse treatment. Everything you tell a healthcare provider is confidential (private). If you are going to have any medical procedure done, the law says that you must give your written consent first. This is called *informed consent*.

As part of informed consent, your healthcare provider will talk to you about the procedure or treatment:

- What will be done,
- Why it is needed,
- The risks of having it done,

- The risks of not having it done, and
- What other choices you may have if you do not want the procedure done.

Make sure that you understand everything that a healthcare provider is telling you. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

Patient Responsibilities

Along with your rights as a patient, you have important responsibilities. Among these are to:

- Arrive early for all medical appointments.
- Call a healthcare provider's office 24 hours in advance if you cannot keep your appointment.
- Bring your Medi-Cal card or other insurance card.
- If you have no insurance, make a plan with the healthcare provider's office for how you will pay.
- Give complete information about your past medical history and your health status now.
- Tell the healthcare provider if you cannot follow the advice given to you, such as taking a medicine the healthcare provider told you to take.

Transportation

- **Bike (bicycle)**—There are laws about where you can ride a bicycle and the use of helmets, etc. You can call the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for information at 1-800-777-0133.
- **Car (automobile)**—To learn about the laws and how to get a license to drive, call the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) at 1-800-777-0133. Your resettlement agency can tell you how to get a car and the insurance that the law requires.
- **Bus**—The buses that transport you in the city are usually called *Transit* or *Metro*. There are different bus systems (for example, *Greyhound*) that can take you to other cities or regions. You can find the many bus systems to take you to another city or state under the title "buses" in the telephone yellow pages book.

- **Train**—Larger cities may have a train system, often called *light rail*, which can carry you through the city. Like buses, there is a different train system that can take you to another city or state. Call Amtrak at 1-800-USA-RAIL (1-800-7245) for more information.
- **Subway**—The underground train system in San Francisco is called Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), in Los Angeles it is called the Metro.

If you are disabled, there are often special systems in your city to help you get around (for example, Paratransit in Sacramento). You can call the Department of Rehabilitation at 1-800-952-5544.

You can also look in the yellow pages under "Transit" or "Transportation" for more information about local transportation. The library or City Hall may also have information for you.

CALIFORNIA RESOURCES

Telephone numbers beginning in the 1-800s (also 877 or 888) are free of charge (toll-free).

There is a 1-800 Information Number to ask if a program has a toll-free number. Dial 1-800-555-1212. You may also call the local information number (411) for a phone number in your area. There is a fee for calling 411.

The telephone book has special places to help you find resources. In the front is the government section (the blue pages) that is divided into City, County, State, and the U.S. If you know the name of a business you can find it in the business section (the pink pages). If you do not know the name, or you are looking for many choices, you can search by subject (for example, "dentists") in the "yellow pages".

Access for Infants & Mothers (AIM)—For a low monthly fee, this program pays for prenatal care, childbirth, and infant health care. Pregnant women who are lower-income, uninsured, and do not qualify for full Medi-Cal, can call **1-800-433-2611**.

American with Disabilities Act (ADA)— protects many rights of the disabled. For more information call **1-800-514-0301**.

Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA)—Can help with doctor, dental, therapy, and other needs for people with developmental disabilities like mental retardation or cerebral palsy. There are 21 Regional Centers in California. For more information call **916-446-7961**.

California Children's Services (CCS)—Pays for health care, therapy, and other help for children and young adults under age 21 who have eligible health problems. Families must also have a financial need to be able to get CCS. Call **1-800-288-4584**.

California Department of Rehabilitation helps disabled people to find jobs and stay independent. Call **1-800-952-5544**.

County Social Services Office ("welfare")—This State program gives aid to needy families until they are able to work. They can assist with refugee cash assistance, Medi-Cal, and Food Stamps. Your nearest office can be found in the phone book under the County Government section or call **1-800-952-5253**.

Child Health & Disability Prevention (CHDP)—A program that gives complete health exams to children even if the child has Medi-Cal. **1-800-993-2437**.

Childhelp USA National Child Abuse Hotline—For questions about child abuse or crisis counseling, call your local agency, or the national hotline at **1-800-422-4453**.

Child Protective Services (CPS)—For questions and concerns about child abuse, call your County CPS office. In the phone book look under "County of" in the Government section and then under "Social Services" or "Human Assistance" for children's services. Or call the California Department of Social Services, Children's Services Operational Bureau at **1-800-866-882-4637**. In an emergency, call **911**.

Healthy Families—If your income is too high for Medi-Cal, but your health insurance does not provide coverage, and you have children under age 19, you may be able to join this program. For a low monthly fee, your child can get medical, vision, and dental care. You can apply for Healthy Families through your local CalWorks ("welfare") office. For more information call **1-888-747-1222**.

In-home Support Services—If you are elderly or disabled and low income you may be able to get this free program from your local county office. IHHS pays for help with personal care (such as bathing and dressing), cooking, cleaning, or driving to health care appointments. Look under the Government Section of the phone book for "County" services, and you will find "Senior" or "Adult Services" under the Health or Social Services Department.

Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)—Has a new name called the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS). This U.S. government agency is in charge of citizenship, permanent residency, employment authorization, immigration status, and

foreign student authorization. They can also help to replace lost immigration documents. For information call **1-800-375-5283**.

Kaiser Permanente Cares for Kids—If your income is too high for Healthy Families, and your child is under age 19, you may be able to get health care for about \$105 a month for the whole family if you live within Kaiser Permanente's area. **1-800-255-5053**.

Libraries—The library near your house is a place to find out about resources in your city. You can also use the computers (for free) to look up support groups, health teaching, and services on the Internet. You will need to bring an English-speaking person to help you.

Medicare—If you are at least 65 years old, or you are permanently disabled, you may be able to be part of this national health program. Medicare provides two types of insurance: Part A is for hospital care, Part B helps you pay for other care such as healthcare provider appointments. For more information on Medicare call **1-800-772-1213**.

Poison Control Center—When something poisonous is eaten, drunk or splashed in the eyes or on the skin, you can call for advice right away, 24 hours a day. Call **1-800-876-4766**. In an emergency, call **911**.

School Lunch—Your child's school may give free lunches and even breakfast. Call your child's school for information. Also ask about the Summer Food program to see if your child can get lunch when school is not in session.

Suicide Line—This service will link you to a free telephone counselor. If you feel so sad that you want to die and might even kill yourself, call the National Hopeline Network at **1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)**. If you need an interpreter, say the name of your language in English and stay on the phone for help.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/State Supplemental Payment (SSP)—These payments are for low-income, blind or disabled people, or low-income people age 65 or older. Apply at your local Social Security office (find under "United States" in the government section of the phone book) or call **1-800-772-1213**.

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)—Is a nutrition program that helps pregnant or breastfeeding women, and children under 5 years, to eat well and stay healthy. They will give you free food coupons and nutrition information. Families with low or medium incomes may qualify. Call your local WIC office or **1-888-942-9675**.

